

Frequently Asked Questions Concerning the School Wellness Policy

1. What is the Local Wellness Policy?

- The Local Wellness Policy requirement is established by [Section 204 of the Public Law 108-265](#), the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004. It requires each local education agency (LEA) or school district participating in the National School Lunch Program and/or School Breakfast Program to develop a local wellness policy that promotes the health of students and addresses the growing problem of childhood obesity.

2. Why does a school district need a Local Wellness Policy?

The Local Wellness Policy is important because it:

- Reaches beyond USDA-funded meal programs to influence children's health;
- Acknowledges local community responsibility to support or build on government efforts;
- Provides an opportunity for school districts to create an environment conducive to healthy lifestyle choices; and
- Recognizes the critical role of schools in curbing the epidemic of childhood overweight and obesity.

3. What does the policy require from school districts?

According to the Local Wellness Policy, school districts must, at a minimum:

- Set goals for nutrition education;
- Set goals for physical activity;
- Set nutrition guidelines for all foods and beverages available on school campuses during the school day;
- Ensure that local guidelines for reimbursable school meals meet the program requirements and nutrition standards set forth by federal regulations;
- Set goals for other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness;
- Involve a broad group of members of the community (see question # 6) draft a plan to measure the implementation of policies; and
- Designate one or more persons within the district or at each school charged with operational responsibility for ensuring that each school fulfills the district's local wellness policy.

4. What would a "plan to measure the implementation process" entail?

Evaluation and feedback are very important in maintaining a local wellness policy. It is also important to assess student, parent, teacher, and administration satisfaction with the new policies. You may want to document any financial impact to the school foodservice program, school stores, or vending machine revenues. A good evaluation plan does not need to be extensive, formal or put additional undue burdens on staff that is involved in the process. Through the evaluation process, you will be able to answer some basic questions that are very important to policymakers, students, school staff, parents, and the general public.

What changes to nutrition education, physical activity, the nutritional quality of foods available to students, and other aspects covered by the policy occurred in each school as a result of the district wellness policy?

- For example:

- Did the number of students participating in nutrition education change?
- Did the students have a different number of minutes of physical activity?
- Did any of the campuses change available food options?
- Did participation in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Program change?

School Wellness Policy FAQ's (continued)

Did the policy and implementation address the issues identified in the needs assessment?

- For example:

- Is it making a difference?
- What's working?
- What's not working?
- How can the impact of the policy be increased to enhance its effect on student health and academic learning?

5. What avenues does the requirement, "nutrition guidelines for all foods and beverages available on school campuses during the school day" include?

Nutrition guidelines should be set for foods sold in the a la carte program, vending machines, fundraisers, student stores, snacks, school parties/celebrations/meetings. Concessions do not need to be included unless they are sold during the school day.

6. Who needs to be involved?

A team of community members must be involved in the development of each local wellness policy. Parents, students, and representatives of the school food authority, the school board, school administrators, and the public must be a part of the development process. It is recommended that a school wellness or school health advisory committee be formed (if not already in place via a school health council) to develop, adopt and implement the policy.

7. What are the deadlines?

Districts must establish local wellness policies by the beginning of School Year 2006-2007, but working with local wellness policies is ongoing. They should be continuously implemented, evaluated, and updated.

8. What is the monitoring process for this policy?

The State Agency (SA) will be responsible for determining compliance through the regular Coordinated Review Effort, School Meals Initiative review or any other type of on-site visit. In the case that a local educational agency (LEA) does not have a wellness policy in place when it is reviewed, the SA should require the LEA to take corrective action. The SA has no obligation, however, to review and evaluate the content of a local wellness policy since the policy is a local decision.

9. Where can I get more information and technical support?

USDA has developed wellness web-resources, as a part of the Team Nutrition website at www.teamnutrition.usda.gov. The [Local Wellness Policy web-pages](#) are a clearinghouse for information, with web pages on policy requirements, sample policy language, examples of existing State and district policies in various wellness topics, the local process (i.e. how to create and implement a local wellness policy), reference materials, and links to more resources. Be sure to also check out the Montana Office of Public Instruction's School Wellness Policy website at: <http://www.opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/wellness.html>.

School Wellness Policy FAQ's (continued)

10. Where can I find model school wellness policies to utilize in developing a policy?

USDA's Team Nutrition Program has an extensive website dedicated to the School Wellness policy which has sample policies and resources from a variety of states. The website address is: www.teamnutrition.usda.gov.

The Montana Office of Public Instruction developed a School Wellness Policy website with model policies (including one from the Montana School Board Association) and resources. The website address is: <http://www.opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/wellness.html>.

11. Are Residential Child Care Institutions (RCCIs) expected to have a wellness policy, in compliance with the requirement in Section 204 of the CN and WIC Reauthorization Act?

Yes, they are. FNS is aware that the people involved in developing the wellness policy might be different than those specified in the law and/or used by a school district. For example, in certain RCCIs, it may be impossible to include a parent with the list of people specified in the law for development of a local wellness policy. Because of the responsibility the RCCI has in providing nutrition and physical activity to children in residence, FNS believes it is important for each RCCI to address wellness policies that will affect the health and development of its residents. It is therefore expected that the RCCI will individualize the wellness policy to meet the unique needs of its institution.

12. Are all schools within an LEA that participate in our school meals programs (including the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program and Special Milk Program), bound by the LEA wellness policy, even if a school within the LEA does not participate in any of the programs?

No. Schools within the LEA that do not participate in any of the school meal programs are not legally required to be bound by the LEA's local wellness policies. However, for consistency, FNS feels that most LEAs will require schools to follow the district policy.

13. Does the wellness policy requirement apply to private schools, including religious private schools, and charter schools?

Yes. Any school that participates in a program authorized under the National School Lunch Act or the Child Nutrition Act must develop a local wellness policy as specified in the Section 204 of the Public Law 108-265, the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004.

14. Do private schools develop their own wellness policy or must they follow the local school district's wellness policy?

Private schools may develop their own wellness policy, or as in the case of parochial schools, the governing board could develop one for all their schools. A private school could also adopt the wellness policy of the local educational agency.

15. Are schools, including private schools that participate in only the Special Milk Program required to develop a wellness policy?

Yes. Schools that participate in the Special Milk Program must have a wellness policy. Considering the special circumstances for schools that only participate in the Special Milk Program, these schools may want to consider adopting a wellness policy developed by a local educational agency.